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SUBJECT: IRANIAN FM MOTTAKI VISIT

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Classified By: Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Jeffrey Rathke
for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met on September 15 in Berlin with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki. The meeting, which took place at Mottaki's request, was only announced that morning, but reportedly was in the works since September 11 at the latest.

The Chancellery did not welcome the visit, noting that the image of the German FM welcoming a senior Iranian official to Berlin was not constructive at this point in time. Chancellery officials declined to meet with Mottaki; it is not clear whether Chancellor Merkel herself was informed of the visit or whether she discussed it with Steinmeier. Mottaki focused mainly on regional stability in the Caucasus.

Steinmeier reportedly called on Iran to make a concrete, constructive response to the P5 1 incentive package and freeze-for-freeze proposal or face new measures. End summary.

12. (C) CHANCELLERY REFUSED MOTTAKI'S MEETING REQUEST, CRITICAL OF MFA DECISION: Chancellery senior-director-equivalent Geza von Geyr told the DCM that the Chancellery was aware of the visit. Von Geyr said that the Chancellery had refused Mottaki's request for a meeting. He underscored that Mottaki had chosen Berlin as the only Western European capital to visit and indicated that he believed the Iranians had purposely sought out FM Steinmeier as an interlocutor. He added that the Chancellery did not consider the meeting helpful to current efforts and that the image of Steinmeier meeting with Mottaki is not constructive.

(Comment: It is not clear whether Chancellor Merkel was aware of the decision or whether she discussed it with Steinmeier. End comment.)

13. (C) MFA JUSTIFIES MEETING AS A MEANS TO MAINTAIN DIALOGUE:

MFA Office Director-equivalent for Middle East Affairs Sabine Sparwasser told Pol MC (joined by French and British Embassy representatives) that Mottaki had requested the meeting on short notice, seeking to meet with Steinmeier before the UNGA. When pressed by Pol MC to explain how agreeing to meet with the Iranians served to maintain international pressure, in advance of UNGA leaders week, Sparwasser answered that Germany found it important to maintain channels of dialogue with the Iranians as a means to deliver the international message to them directly and firmly. She noted that Mottaki had traveled directly to Berlin from Tehran and back with no additional destinations. When pressed by a French diplomat as to why the Iranians had chosen Berlin rather than Paris or Brussels, Sparwasser answered that the Iranians consistently emphasize Germany and Iran's history of good relations.

14. (C) CAUCASUS: ISRAEL, INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE TO BLAME, IRAN READY TO BE REGIONAL DEALBROKER: According to Sparwasser, Mottaki spent the majority of the 60-minute discussion between the 6-person delegations reviewing the situation in the Caucasus, expressing Iranian concern while also laying blame at the feet of "Israeli actors", as well as "international influences" that had encouraged Georgia to act, leading to a "massive miscalculation" by the Georgian government. Mottaki claimed that during his visit to Moscow on September 14, the Russians had suggested that Iran take a stronger role in encouraging regional cooperation. Mottaki emphasized Iran's regional leadership role and emphasized its particular interest in improving relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Steinmeier reviewed Germany's views of the Caucasus situation, stressing that the EU's job is to transform a fragile ceasefire into permanent peace for the region. He noted that regional neighbors need to help the situation, and inquired as to whether Iran had been in discussions with Turkey; Mottaki indicated not. Sparwasser added that Mottaki was particularly interested in learning German views of the prospect of Georgia joining NATO.

15. (C) MOTTAKI BEMOANS STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS; STEINMEIER PRESSES FOR FREEZE-FOR-FREEZE RESPONSE: According to Sparwasser, Mottaki reviewed at length the history of German-Iranian relations and expressed concern that relations, particularly on the economic front, needed to be expanded. He noted that there is much Iranian interest in European trade and investment, but that Asia remains a strong alternative. Sparwasser said that Steinmeier told Mottaki that Iran must first fulfill the precondition of solving the nuclear question before bilateral relations could fulfill their potential. He emphasized that Germany had worked hard

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to convince all six P5 1 members to sign an offer that was very generous to the Iranian government and the Iranian people; the P5 1 had worked very hard, now it is up to Iran to respond.

16. (C) Sparwasser provided a brief readout from Steinmeier's 30-minute one-on-one discussion with Mottaki. Steinmeier reportedly expressed disappointment in the latest IAEA report and called on Iran to cooperate, provide the requested information, and establish confidence. He called on Iran to either reply constructively to the incentive package or else face the fact that new measures would be taken against Iran. In regards to the freeze-for-freeze offer, he called on Iran to respond concretely. Mottaki reportedly asked for more details on the P5 1's freeze-for-freeze offer; MFA officials noted that Germany has explained the freeze-for-freeze proposal to Iranian officials (including chief nuclear negotiator Jalili and Supreme National Security Council member Bagheri) in recent weeks. They speculated that Mottaki either was not informed on this score, or that he needed to hear things for himself.

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